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**Nominations Requested for Montana's Tourism Awards
-- Deadline is March 26, 2008 --**

(HELENA) – The Governor's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) is accepting nominations for the 2008 Montana Tourism Awards. Nominations for Tourism Person of the Year, Tourism Community of the Year, Tourism Event of the Year and Tourism Partnership of the Year will be accepted.

"Travel and tourism is integral to Montana" said Governor Brian Schweitzer, "and it is the invaluable contributions of those working within this industry that make it such a vital component of our economy."

Commerce Director Anthony Preite encourages the submittal of nominations to formally recognize those that work diligently on behalf of Montana's tourism industry.

"The awards recognize individuals, events, communities and partnerships whose efforts to promote or develop Montana's tourism opportunities, this year or for a series of years, have preserved or enhanced tourism's role in Montana's economy" said Preite.

The award winners will be announced at the 34th Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation scheduled for April 17-18, 2008, at the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort in West Yellowstone, Montana.

Nomination forms are available from the Department of Commerce - Travel Montana by calling Barb Sanem at 406-841-2769 or e-mail bsanem@mt.gov. The forms are also available electronically at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/awards.asp. The deadline for nominations is 5 p.m. March 26, 2008.

The 2007 award winners included Tourism Person of the Year Mike Scholz of Big Sky and Community of the Year Roundup, Montana. The 75th Anniversary of the Montana State Fair won in the Tourism Event category and the Montana Dinosaur Trail was awarded the Tourism Partnership of the Year.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2006, 10.3 million people visited Montana spending \$2.9 billion during their stay. Over 48,580 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal income for Montana residents.

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